

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the above-captioned patent application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for the operation of a panel placement system for punching presses ~~wherein~~ comprising the steps of:
moving a feed slide is moved between the punching die of the punching press and a transfer position located in front of the punching press[[],]
seizing a panel in the rear area thereof wherein first connection means of the feed slide, in the transfer position, seize ~~a panel in the rear area~~ said panel to advance it stepwise through said punching press in response to the cycle of said punching press, ~~characterized in that~~ and in which said first connection means seize said panel exclusively from above in a rear edge area which is located between the rear edge and the surfaces to be punched out.
2. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein said feed slide is guided by a slide guideway and is moved along a first axis towards said punching die and away therefrom to a pick-up position, wherein said first connection means further are guided by the feed slide and are preferably dislocated along a second axis perpendicular to the first axis, and wherein an advancement slide having releasable second connection means is dislocated along the first axis to feed a panel to a transfer position for a take-over by said first connection means with one panel being seized by said first connection means from above at the rear edge area during a punching step of the punching press in the transfer position which corresponds to the panel position for the first punching step of said punching press and the advancement slide brings a succeeding panel into the transfer position when said first connection means have reached their take-over position along the two axes.

3. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein two feed slides are guided by a slide guideway each and are dislocated along a first axis between said punching die of said punching press and a transfer position, wherein said first connection means further are guided by the respective feed slide and are preferably dislocated along a second axis perpendicular to the first axis.

4. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein said first connection means seize the rear edge area via a vacuum.

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that said~~ claim 1, wherein said first connection means seize the rear edge area electromagnetically.

6. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 2, ~~characterized in that each~~ including the steps of advancing succeeding panel is advanced panels below said first panel by means of said second connection means.

7. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein the rear edge area, when received, is lifted against said first connection means.

8. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein said first connection means carry out a lowering and lifting motion to seize the rear edge area of the panel.

9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 7, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein at least one of said panel ~~or~~ and said rear edge area is lifted by separate lifting means against said first connection means.

10. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 9, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein said first connection means are active across a major ~~with~~ width of the panel.

~~11.~~ (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 10, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein said first connection means seize the panel in a positive fit by means of pointed projections which penetrate into the rear edge area of the panel when said connection means have seized said edge area.

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 11, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein said first connection means and ~~the a~~ remaining grid are separated from each other by means of a gas beam.

13. (Currently Amended) Connection means for carrying out the method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 12, characterized in that they~~ claim 1, wherein said means are disposed on at least one ledge ~~(25)~~ which cause gripping portions ~~(50, 56)~~ to engage gores of said rear edge area which are defined between the panel surfaces to be punched out and said rear edge.

14. (Currently Amended) The connection means according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said ledge ~~(25)~~ is coupled to a vacuum source and has at least one suction port ~~(50)~~ at ~~the an~~ underside thereof.

15. (Currently Amended) The connection means according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said ledge ~~(25)~~ has one or more electromagnets to seize the panel from above.

16. (Currently Amended) The connection means according to ~~any one of claims 13 to 15, characterized in that~~ claim 13, wherein said ledge ~~(25)~~ ~~has~~ includes a plurality of relatively sharp projections ~~(56)~~ at ~~the an~~ underside thereof, which penetrate into the material of said panel or a coat covering said panel when said connection means are in engagement with said rear edge area.

17. (Currently Amended) The connection means according to claim 16, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein pin-like spikes are provided as projections which penetrate through said panel.

18. (Currently Amended) The connection means according to claim 17, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said spikes are disposed within ~~the~~ suction ports ~~(50)~~ of vacuum nozzles.